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‘Hard to reach’ or ‘easy to ignore’?  
Promoting equality in community  
engagement

## What Works Scotland Evidence Review:

'Hard to reach' or 'easy to ignore'? Promoting equality in community engagement



This evidence review is one of a series of papers that What Works Scotland (WWS) is publishing to share evidence, learning and ideas about public service reform.

### **What Works Scotland**

What Works Scotland aims to improve the way local areas in Scotland use evidence to make decisions about public service development and reform.

What Works Scotland is working with Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) and stakeholder partners to achieve its aims, namely to:

- Identify and better understand what is working and not working in public service delivery in Scotland, and how we can translate knowledge from setting to setting
- Contribute to the development of a Scottish model of service delivery that brings about transformational change for people living in different places across Scotland

What Works Scotland (2014-2017) is a collaborative between The Scottish Government, the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), The University of Edinburgh and the University of Glasgow.

[www.whatworksscotland.ac.uk](http://www.whatworksscotland.ac.uk)

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## 1. Summary points

- Groups that have been known in the past as 'hard to reach' are now more appropriately recognised as 'easy to ignore'. Those facing inequalities, sometimes multiple inequalities, are often easy to ignore due to the complexity of their situation, the difficulty of forming a solution and a lack of understanding from governments, organisations and programmes.
- Communities are now recognised to exist beyond geographical areas therefore more needs to be done to tackle the inequalities faced by communities of identity (such as LGBT+ groups) and communities of interest (such as women's groups).
- Inequalities faced at large in society – education, confidence, resources, responsibilities (work and caring), language barriers, disabilities – often constitute the key barriers that prevent people from taking part in community engagement processes in the first instance.
- A focus on enabling access to participation is not enough. People frequently suffer from multiple barriers throughout the process of community engagement once they have managed to gain access.
- The complexity of ensuring inclusion in community engagement does not render itself to a one-size-fits-all solution.
- The know-how of skilled participation practitioners and community organisers is required. These individuals have a deep understanding of the craft of inclusive engagement as well as a flexible repertoire of strategies and techniques to implement it.
- Local community engagement can overcome some barriers to inclusion, but there are structural inequalities in society (e.g. income, wealth) that are beyond the scope of influence of local processes.
- Power-sharing relies heavily on trust and openness; people are more open to collaborate in partnerships if they know what is involved and there is a clear shared purpose. Partnerships need to be forged between communities, third sector and governments but also between neighbourhoods, community groups, community development organisations and groups on the ground to better reflect the issues and needs of particular communities.
- Respecting participants' investment of time and energy is key to long term participation and involvement. Recognition includes financial incentives, to ensure that people from low income backgrounds can get involved, and also remuneration, for those who need to take time off work and for help with childcare and transport. This affords greater levels of equity in taking part by lowering the barriers to participation.
- The role of community representative can be daunting for citizens. Many will never have spoken on behalf of their community or made decisions which will affect so many people. Greater support must be offered to ensure community representatives are not overwhelmed and put off taking part in the future.
- Community engagement initiatives need to be responsive and sensitive to the areas where they take place and the people that live there. More needs to be done to provide education, information and support to community members, including introducing 'technical friends' (individuals who can help translate any complexities associated with terminology or the participation process), community organisers and trained facilitators.
- Effective facilitation can make the difference between productive and non-productive community engagement. Training and support must also be offered to facilitators and organisers to ensure that they are equipped to deal with a high-pressure role.
- Internet access is crucial for engagement in today's society. Better use of digital technology, such as social media, online forums, databases highlighting good practice and recording/streaming processes online, helps to gain insights from those who cannot access face-to-face community forums, but also encourages those that could get involved in the future, such as young people.
- There is little evidence on the long-term effects of taking part and not taking part in community engagement; more research is required in this area. Recognising who benefits from community engagement, and who does not, requires greater use of community impact assessments; equality impact assessments; strategic community assessments or auditing of the processes and longitudinal studies.

## 2. Introduction

This review is part of the What Works Scotland (WWS) Work programme on community engagement and capacity building. It also follows from the Collaborative Action Research workstream, where WWS case study partners have highlighted Community Engagement as a cross-cutting theme. In addition, WWS National and Learning Partners have expressed sustained interest in the topic. Finally, equality and community engagement are central to core policy developments and frameworks that guide current public sector reform (i.e. Christie Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services; Community Empowerment Act 2015; Fairer Scotland; Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy<sup>1</sup>).

The review will be relevant to the public and third sectors, as well as the research community in academia, government and activism. It aims to provide a resource for community engagement practitioners and policy workers. The key motivation for this review of the literature is to explore the intersection between community engagement and inequality. This is important because inequalities in health, wealth, income, education and so on, can be arguably seen as stemming from inequalities in power and influence (e.g. Lee et al. 2015; Bartels 2017). Therefore, community engagement processes can simply reproduce existing inequalities, unless they are designed and facilitated to distribute influence by ensuring diversity and inclusion.

Following the significant turnout for the Scottish Independence referendum along with the grassroots campaigns, information sessions, sub-groups and committees it is apparent that Scottish people wish to engage (COSLA 2014). Yet with only 34% of adults in Scotland expressing the desire to be more involved in council decision-making, according to the Scottish Household Survey (2016)<sup>2</sup>, it is necessary to understand why individuals and communities do not get involved in formal processes. Exploring the evidence around community engagement will give insights into how inequality impacts on people's ability to get involved and how these challenges can be overcome.

### About this review

This review examines what is being done to overcome inequality in community engagement focussing on evidence from Scotland and the UK. The evidence included highlights the difficulties in pursuing such a complex and critical action plan. The research findings are presented in Section 5 under three main headings:

- How is the relationship between equality and community engagement conceptualised in the literature?
- What are the key dimensions and factors in the relationship between community engagement and equality? (i.e. in terms of both process and outcomes)
- What Works? What are the most effective strategies and approaches to ensure equality in community engagement?

There are many definitions and discourses surrounding 'equality' and 'inequality'. The first section looks at the competing aspects of inequality including societal inequalities – such as socio-economic position, geographical location, gender, disabilities and education – as well as the inequalities citizens face in accessing and taking part in citizen engagement processes. The second section looks at the key issues within citizen engagement highlighted by the literature, including power-sharing, partnerships, funding and bureaucracy, the role of representatives of communities and digital resources. Finally, the report reflects on some solutions for overcoming the challenges in tackling inequality in community engagement.

Each of these sections provides a summary of the main findings and encourages the readers to reflect on a number of Talking Points. Signposting to further reading is also provided. Details on how this review was carried out can be found in the appendices.

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.gov.scot/resource/doc/352649/0118638.pdf>  
<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/engage/CommEmpowerBill>  
<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/10/9964>  
<http://www.localdemocracy.info>

<sup>2</sup><http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/09/9979>

### 3. Use of terms

**In/equality:** 'inequality' and 'equality' are used inconsistently and in a number of contexts to refer to a variety of situations. The degree to which someone faces in/equality or the context of that in/equality is not always the same or apparent to other people. In order to undertake a broad approach to the evidence review, our understanding here of inequality is when a person/group or community is unfairly or negatively impacted due to where they live; their personal characteristics or circumstances, or their lived experience. Equality is when people are treated fairly and equally, this may include different approaches in reaching that target. Section 5.1 discusses the different aspects of in/equality faced in community engagement.

**Equalities groups:** refers to those who face discrimination or social exclusion due to personal characteristics. These will include 'protected characteristics' as laid out in the Equality Act 2010<sup>3</sup>.

**Community:** is a group of people united by at least one common characteristic, including geography, identity or shared interest (NSfCE 2016: 8).

**Community engagement:** is when citizens and groups are actively involved in the future of their communities. This includes developing relationships between communities, community organisations and public and private bodies to shape and implement policies, strategies and decisions, and identify community needs (NSfCE 2016: 6).

**Deliberative democracy:** is a form of democracy that emphasises communication, in particular the use of reasoned dialogue and deliberation as the foundation for informed policy and decision-making. Deliberative democrats argue that the process of decision-making is just as important as the outcome (see Escobar 2011: 34; Dryzek 2010).

**Democratic innovations:** are newly formalised ways of engaging citizens in policy, legislative and constitutional decision-making. These are institutions which offer citizens a formal role in political decision-making, essentially readdressing the power balance between citizens, interest groups and politicians in representative democracies (Smith 2009; Elstub and Escobar forthcoming 2018) including mini-publics, participatory budgeting and digital innovations.

**Social cohesion:** the willingness of people to form partnerships and work together for a common purpose. A cohesive society creates a sense of belonging and trust for its members which contributes to upward mobility (OECD 2011).

### 4. Evidence overview

#### 4.1 Evidence landscape

There is a wealth of evidence on community engagement and issues of equality. This review includes evidence from public policy, local governance, social policy and environmental justice and management. The subject areas where it is most prominent in the UK includes ecology, urban regeneration, health, young people and deliberative democracy; although gender and education feature too.

#### Community engagement around the world

The topic of community engagement features heavily in academia and public policy all over the world, including Australia, China, the Americas and Europe. Community engagement is sought from local to supranational level, by national governments, the European Union (EU), the United Nations (UN), and transnationally between single nations, for example the United States and Canada. The geographical focus of this review is primarily centred on Scotland, with a secondary interest in the UK. Approximately half of the evidence included in this review focuses on the Scottish context, while the rest looks at the UK as a whole. The reviews carried out on the UK include some examples or case studies from Wales, Northern Ireland, Scotland and areas in England including but not limited to, Sheffield, Manchester and Cornwall. A selection of articles included focus on Australia, Ireland and Canada.

<sup>3</sup>See <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/protected-characteristics>; and boxes 2 and 3 in this paper on page 6.



## **Research and focus**

There is a great catalogue of theoretical articles on community engagement. Many focus on why inequalities should, or could, be overcome rather than on how they are. The literature predominantly discusses/theorises how particular programmes (neighbourhood organisations, stakeholder meetings, community groups) promote equality; or review policy initiatives implemented by the Scottish or the UK government, including Area-Based Initiatives (ABIs) and Social Inclusion Partnerships (SIP). There are also articles that focus on why community engagement in research will lead to equality. The last ten years has seen an increase in the amount of empirical<sup>4</sup> work included in the peer-reviewed<sup>5</sup> literature, possibly due to the availability of funding for research projects on this subject from the Scottish Government and university research centres. The grey<sup>6</sup> literature is encouragingly diverse and varied on the subject matter with reports evaluating Police Stop and Search procedure; reviewing SIPs, mini-publics, housing, education; and the inclusion of particular communities such as the LGBT+ community, youth engagement and geographical communities.

## **Methods**

The peer-reviewed literature largely comprises of evidence reviews focusing on community empowerment programmes, deliberative processes and stakeholder meetings; including reviews of existing policies, evaluations of participatory processes and innovative programmes or case studies. Various analytical frameworks have been applied within the literature and a mix of qualitative research methods such as surveys, interviews and focus groups. Methods of analysis include ethnography and case study analysis. The quantitative studies make use of existing data, including the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, and carry out statistical analysis of new data collected through interviews and surveys. Much of the grey literature uses qualitative methods too - interviews, focus groups, surveys, case studies and evaluation and observation work.

### **4.2 Gaps in research**

A number of gaps are evident following the review of the existing literature focusing on the Scottish context. The academic literature is slow to be released following many of the remarkable projects and initiatives that are taking place, and are often limited in detail due to standardised article formats. More details are required about projects, including organisation, best practice and lessons that can be taken from existing formats and what can be achieved through new formats. The review also highlighted that there is little follow-up evidence of how people felt following their involvement in community engagement projects. More could be done to understand the long-term implications of participation, or non-participation, and how it impacts on people's lives beyond the process. This will include looking at how people cope with the task in terms of workload and responsibility, but also how people feel about being held accountable for, or being left out of, decision-making.

### **4.3 Research in Scotland**

In Scotland, the drive towards community engagement has been deliberate. New and innovative designs of community participation have been trialled by the Scottish Government, including focus groups, public dialogues, participatory budgeting, mini-publics, community action research, social media campaigns and online surveys and petitions (NSfCE 2016) leading to a wealth of literature and research in a Scottish context (Stafford et al. 2003; Breitenbach 2006; Mayne 2010; Davidson and Stark 2011; Roberts and Escobar 2015; Harkins et al. 2016; Smith et al. 2017).

Community engagement has been promoted in a number of key areas including, though not limited to, health, environment (renewables) and urban regeneration (both of which include land-use and planning),

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<sup>4</sup>In the context of this review, studies were deemed to be empirical if they followed a documented process to collect and / or collate and analyse data to answer specified research questions.

<sup>5</sup>Peer review is a process used to ensure the quality of academic work through a process of academics with similar expertise reviewing each other's work.

<sup>6</sup>Grey literature refers to documents that are not found through publishers or databases, such as company reports, reports published by not-for-profit organisations, and conference reports. Such literature is generally not peer reviewed.

gender, education, youth involvement, housing rights and policing (see Nixon et al. 2001; Stafford et al. 2003; Breitenbach 2006; Peel and Lloyd 2007; Carlisle 2010; Muir and McMahon 2015; Kelleher et al. 2014; Roberts and Escobar 2015).

Important research has been carried out looking at place-based policies in Scotland (Matthews et al. 2012); as well as housing (McKee 2007), gender (McLaughlin 2009) and partnerships in public services (Cook 2015). This has included projects through the Boundary Commission<sup>7</sup>, Marine Scotland, Police Scotland, the Big Lottery, What Works Scotland and Health Scotland (Harkins et al. 2016; Cook 2015; Carley et al. 2000; O'Neill et al. 2015) which have had varying degrees of success. Further attention from the Scottish Government has been directed on the work place, education and funding in an attempt to mainstream equality.

Positive outcomes from community engagement include project and service delivery that better responds to communities' needs, and local knowledge and skills effectively used in improving the community experience<sup>8</sup>.

Clear guidelines on best practice and lessons learned have been set out by the National Standards for Community Engagement (NSfCE 2016); the Community Engagement 'How To' Guide; the Community Engagement Community Planning Toolkit; the Visioning Outcomes in Community Engagement (VOICE) online platform; Education Scotland and Learning Connections Guide on Community Learning and Development activity with equalities groups (2010); Community Engagement: A Critical guide for Practitioners (2017) and the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act introduced in 2015<sup>9</sup>. This learning allows policy-making to better reflect smaller and diverse communities and seek greater levels of social cohesion in a time of increased globalisation and diversity. The Scottish Government website<sup>10</sup> states that:

*Scotland's communities are a rich source of energy, creativity and talent. They are made up of people with rich and diverse backgrounds who each have something to contribute to making Scotland flourish. Central and local government needs to help communities to work together and release that potential to create a more prosperous and fairer Scotland.*

The NSfCE (2016) sets out a particular framework for researchers and organisers highlighting good practice; these include seven national standards<sup>11</sup> (see box 1).

#### **BOX 1: National Standards for Community Engagement**

- Inclusion: identify and involve the people and organisations affected by the focus of the engagement.
- Support: identify and overcome barriers to participation.
- Planning: make sure there is a clear purpose for the engagement, which is based on shared understanding of community needs and ambitions.
- Working together: work effectively together to achieve the aims of the engagement.
- Methods: use methods of engagement that are fit for purpose.
- Communication: communicate clearly and regularly with the people, organisations and communities affected by the engagement.
- Impact: assess the impact of the engagement and use what has been learned to improve our future community.

<sup>7</sup>See <http://egenda.dumgal.gov.uk/aksdumgal/images/att7618.pdf>

<sup>8</sup>More information can be found at following links: <https://beta.gov.scot/policies/equality/>  
<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0042/00421238.pdf> [http://www.parliament.scot/ResearchBriefingsAndFactsheets/S4/SB\\_11-50.pdf](http://www.parliament.scot/ResearchBriefingsAndFactsheets/S4/SB_11-50.pdf)  
 See Scottish Government Community Funds <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Built-Environment/regeneration/communityfunds> and  
 NSfCE <http://www.voicescotland.org.uk/>

<sup>9</sup>The guidelines can be found at the following: <http://www.gov.scot/resource/doc/94257/0084550.pdf> <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/engage/HowToGuide> <http://www.scdc.org.uk/community-engagement/> <http://www.scdc.org.uk/what/voice/>  
<http://www.communityplanningtoolkit.org/sites/default/files/Engagement.pdf> <http://journals.ed.ac.uk/ojs-images/concept/community-engagement.pdf>

<sup>10</sup><http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/engage> (accessed June 2017)

<sup>11</sup>The seven NSfCE can be found here: <http://www.scdc.org.uk/what/national-standards/>

Efforts made to achieve the national standards in Scotland and examples can be seen through organisations and planned events such as the Health and Social Care Integration consultation; the Diversity and Equality Alliance; 'Our Rights, Our Voices' and many community based projects<sup>12</sup>. Much has been done and achieved but as the report will show, more is to be done if equality is to be achieved through community engagement.

## 5. Findings

### 5.1 How is the relationship between equality and community engagement conceptualised in the literature?

There are key terms that need unpicking in order to better understand and tackle inequality of engagement. Many terms are multifaceted and open to interpretation, these include terms such as equality, 'hard-to-reach' and 'easy-to-ignore' which are often depicted differently in the literature.

The term 'equality' is particularly problematic. There are different ways of defining equality, including 'equal treatment', 'equity', 'fairness' and 'justice' and various approaches to achieving it, be it 'equality of opportunity' or 'equality of outcome', according to Glasgow's Learning Equalities Online Toolkit<sup>13</sup> and Community Learning and Development activity with equalities groups (2010)<sup>14</sup>. Very often equality will be coupled with the term diversity, highlighting the need to recognise and value differences (see box 2 and 3).

#### BOX 2: Defining Equalities Groups

Those who face discrimination or social exclusion due to personal characteristics, including:

- age • disability • gender • race or ethnicity • language
- faith, religion or belief • sexual orientation • gender identity • marriage or civil partnership • pregnancy or maternity • socio-economic hardship

(Source: Education Scotland, Same Difference 2010)

#### BOX 3: Communities that fall under the heading of equality groups:

- Minority ethnic groups • people with disabilities • faith communities
- LGBT+ people • older people • young people

(Source: Education Scotland, Same Difference 2010)

**Groups that have been known in the past as hard-to-reach are referred to as easy-to-ignore in this report, as well as more widely** (Matthews et al. 2012; Muir and McMahon 2015; Nelson and Taberner 2017).

Hard-to-reach groups are labelled as such because they are considered difficult to reach by researchers/policy-makers and organisations. According to Ellard-Gray et al. (2015) this can be due to their geographical location; their social position (i.e. class) and/ or because they are vulnerable, often due to some form of discrimination.

The term easy-to-ignore recognises that it is more complex than groups just being hard-to-reach: these groups are ignored because it is easier than tackling the diverse and hugely complicated barriers that some people face. There are structural and epistemic weaknesses in many of the outreach programmes, policies and projects which fail to recognise the needs of many groups and individuals. These groups are often referred to as 'less visible', 'vulnerable groups' and 'seldom heard' in the literature (yellow book Ltd 2017; Ellard-Gray et al. 2015; Kelleher et al. 2014; Iriss 2011).

<sup>12</sup>For examples of the projects and democratic innovations in Scotland and how they are supported see:

NSfCE (2016: 10-23), <http://www.voicescotland.org.uk/> <https://www.communitydevelopmentalliancescotland.org>  
<http://www.communityscot.org.uk> <https://pbscotland.scot>; <http://www.dtascot.org.uk>  
<http://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk> <https://www.surf.scot>; <http://inclusionscotland.org>

<sup>13</sup>See [http://equalities.glasgowlearning.org.uk/the\\_basics/what\\_do\\_we\\_mean\\_by\\_equalities\\_groups](http://equalities.glasgowlearning.org.uk/the_basics/what_do_we_mean_by_equalities_groups)

<sup>14</sup>See [http://www.i-develop-cld.org.uk/pluginfile.php/209/mod\\_resource/content/1/SameDifference\\_tcm4-863909.pdf](http://www.i-develop-cld.org.uk/pluginfile.php/209/mod_resource/content/1/SameDifference_tcm4-863909.pdf)

**More recently it has been recognised that our understanding of 'community' must be expanded.** The Community Empowerment Act (2015) states that the term '...community' includes any community based on common interest, identity or geography'. Yet policy very often focuses on area-based initiatives which concentrate on implementing change in very specific geographical communities in the form of Community Planning Partnerships and Social Inclusion Partnerships in Scotland, and the New Deal for Communities in England tackling some of the most deprived areas<sup>15</sup> (Goodlad et al. 2005; Carlisle 2010).

Matthews et al. (2012) highlights the difficulty associated with underestimating the complexities of communities: 'In Scotland it is easy to presume that the most deprived neighbourhoods are homogenous, working class and White'. As communities exist more widely than communities of place, place-based policies may be overlooking communities who are challenged by more than one characteristic, such as communities of interest and identity (yellow book Ltd 2017). Long term this means that it is not enough to focus on geographic regions to tackle exclusion but it requires a more sophisticated understanding of the spatial distribution of equalities groups (Matthews et al. 2012: 3) and the level of impact on those who community engagement seeks to help.

**The structural inequalities embedded in society mean that people are approaching participation processes from very different backgrounds and viewpoints,** in terms of income, age, location, gender and so forth (Carlisle 2010). Brighouse (2002: 52) highlights that there is a paradox connected with the implementation of participation and deliberative processes under a capitalist system. As participation is not challenging structural issues, such as economic inequalities, this cannot offer greater levels of political equality as some have access to resources that others do not (Barker 2005; Goodlad et al. 2005; Carlisle 2010; Attree et al. 2011). This means that there is a limit to what local community engagement can do in the face of structural inequalities. Social cohesion cannot deliver an equal political playing field because those without resources are ill-equipped to challenge those with power (Brighouse 2002; Bartel 2017).

The following section focuses on how citizen engagement and inequality are conceptualised in the literature. Two key dimensions, equality of access and equality within the process, are explored in turn. The limited evidence available on the personal outcomes of participation in community engagement is then discussed.

### 5.1.1 Existing barriers: equality of access

The challenges and barriers different people face when accessing community engagement vary greatly. We know that people in low earning households, who have lower levels of education or live in deprived areas are consistently less likely to participate in civic activities (Marcinkiewicz et al. 2016) therefore they are less likely to have their needs and wants reflected in the outcome. But why is this the case?

Blake et al. (2008: 31) describe how barriers to participation can manifest in a variety of ways: Practical barriers: lack of resources (information, understanding of process), transportation or childcare; Personal barriers: lack of confidence or language issues; Socio-economic barriers: people in low earning employment working more than one job and haven't the time and/or unstable position of asylum seekers; and Motivational barriers: scepticism that taking part will make a difference or that the government will take them seriously. This synopsis can be witnessed in much of the evidence which looks at citizen engagement in Scotland (Hamer 2015; Miller et al. 2015; Mackie and Tett 2013; Matthews et al. 2012; Carlisle 2010). Communities can face one or all of these barriers when attempting to enter community engagement processes.

### Equalities groups in decision-making

Complications arise when attempting to implement a 'one size fits all' approach to the sort of difficulties facing equalities groups. Women are often disadvantaged due to domestic and caring responsibilities, lack of confidence, poverty and other issues including language, cultural barriers and stereotyping (Blake et al. 2008: 47; McLaughlin 2009). The struggles women face though are specific to region, situation, age, employment, childcare provisions, race, ethnicity, religion and so forth. Therefore, 'women's issues' cannot be easily addressed by one policy or initiative due to the scope of the problem and the diversity of women as a 'group' or community (Breitenbach 2006).

<sup>15</sup>See <http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/documents/research/place-based-approaches-report.pdf> Muscat (2010)  
<http://www.cles.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Area-Based-Initiatives-do-they-deliver.pdf>

People that face racial discrimination are likely to be grouped in the same category, scarcely recognizing the distinct sub-categories that exist within these groups; single parents, ethnic groups, elderly people, people with disabilities and so forth. Blake et al. (2008) highlight that separate groups may be 'clumped together' (denoted by the popular term Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities) and are often assumed to be respectively homogenous but whose wants and needs are fundamentally different (Blake et al. 2008: 32).

Fear of discrimination can keep groups from entering community engagement initiatives (McClellan and O'Connor 2003). This can affect people with disabilities, immigrants, young people and the senior demographic. People with disabilities are not helped to participate usually due to the budget restrictions that many organisers face, as well as their own financial restraints, issues of accessibility, and because organisers rarely understand the challenges that people with disabilities face (Attree et al. 2011: 255). Community engagement processes often require participants move about, stand or sit for long periods of time and this can be also be difficult for older people (Edwards 2002).

### **Young people and children in decision-making**

The Scottish Government has made substantial progress in involving young people and children in decision-making. This is based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to express their views freely and have their opinions heard (UNCRC Article 12)<sup>16</sup>.

Participative processes involving children and young people in Scotland have included a number of consultation and engagement activities on topics such as children's rights, health inequalities, anti-social behaviour and climate change<sup>17</sup> as well as the establishment and work of the Scottish Youth Parliament; involving 4200 young people in participatory budgeting (Harkins et al. 2016) and a Strategic Plan (2016-2020) which builds on work carried out from 2012-2016. Yet recognition must be given to the barriers young people face in accessing the political process.

Evidence suggests that young people that do participate tend to be those that are 'confident, well-educated, articulate, socially orientated, older children' who are part of youth and school organisations (Carnegie UK Trust 2008; Kelleher 2014). As Mackie and Tett (2013: 392) note, 'The position of equality of opportunity taken by the Scottish Government – rather than equality of outcome – ignores the impact of factors such as poverty and race which serve to marginalise young people at an early age', deeply impacting on young people's life chances and choices.

Young people are being sent a mixed message: they are encouraged to take an interest in shaping their futures but do not have the right to vote until they are 18 in the UK. As Nancy Fraser sums up, the conditions of a just society require 'social arrangements that permit all members of society to interact with one another as peers' (Fraser 2003: 38). The Scottish Government raised this issue and reduced the voting age to 16 for the Independence Referendum in 2014. The law was subsequently changed in Scotland to lower the voting age for Scottish Parliament and local government elections to 16, but if young people are expected to be invested in their future this seems a basic step<sup>18</sup>.

Bessant (2004) considers that 'young people are understood to be members of society in so far as they belong to it, but have that bare presence without inclusion or representation'. Young people themselves have highlighted that there is no point taking part if they are not consulted from the beginning; 'People consulting should not assume young people are going to like adult ideas and give the responses adults want, but ask for young people's own ideas' (cited Stafford et al. 2003: 365). It is often assumed that young people are disinterested or ill-equipped to take part in politics and will just reflect the opinions of those around them, such as their parents or teachers (Eichhorn 2017).

Young people are more likely to be stopped and searched by police (O'Neill et al. 2015; Miller et al. 2015); have significant levels of unemployment and are expected to work for low wages (Roberts 2011; Mackie and Tett

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<sup>16</sup> [https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights\\_overview.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> See Scottish government <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Young-People/families/youth-work-participation>

<sup>18</sup> For more information on young people participating in the Scottish referendum see Eichhorn (2017): <http://www.centreonconstitutionalchange.ac.uk/blog/young-voters-and-referendum-%E2%80%93-legacy>



2013). Miller et al.'s (2015: 473-4) study notes that young people who feel ostracised or marginalised in society are less likely to get involved or feel that they can get involved which 'causes some of them to push back or lose faith in more formal structures within the community'. Formalised structures include the police, schools and social services. Consequently young people can feel misunderstood and misrepresented.

### Trust in the process

A further barrier to participation is trust in organisers, policy makers and researchers. Many members of the public are reluctant to enter the participatory process through fear that they won't be listened to; that the process is tokenistic or that their ideas will not be acted on (Stafford et al. 2003; Todd and Zografos 2005; Attree et al. 2011; Ellard-Gray et al. 2015).

Arnstein historically highlighted that participatory processes, including community engagement, can be used as a one way process designed to placate the public and make them feel heard without having any real influence over the outcome (see Arnstein 1969 for her useful framework). Therefore, people can be understandably suspicious about getting involved when they have seen few results for their efforts. Community engagement projects can be off-putting depending on people's experiences. In turn, these experiences can foster a virtuous circle of participation or a vicious circle of cynicism and distrust.

Barriers exist in getting involved with community engagement and equality of access is a troubling starting point setting out considerable challenges for organisers and communities

## 5.1.2 Existing barriers: equality within the process

**Gaining access to community engagement processes does not guarantee the same level of control over the outcome.** Historically, many academics support the claim that those facing inequalities, or discriminated in society, will face the same barriers within community processes (Mansbridge 1983; Fraser 1992; Sanders 1997; Young 2000). Iris Marion Young (2000) famously refers to this as 'internal exclusion'.

**Groups struggling with different challenges may face internal exclusion.** For example, they may have low levels of education; struggle with health and/or mental health issues; have hearing impairments; use English as a second language; or have low confidence particularly in the presence of dominant participants (Goodlad et al. 2005; Carlisle 2010). Further to this, in many instances the challenge is not necessarily getting people to participate or engage but actually ensuring that the dynamics of that participation are fair.

**Language barriers exist beyond English as a second language to include those who are unfamiliar with the language of a formal setting.** Participants may have difficulty with overly technical descriptions and jargon. As Roberts and Escobar (2015: 102) perceptively note 'it is not simply a matter of sharing airtime equitably – some people can do more with less time' which means that certain participants are more forceful or more persuadable (Sanders 1997; Fischer 2009). As Roberts and Escobar (2015: 109) warn there may be dominant speakers using 'privileged language' and excluding others.

**Gender:** Sanders' study found that it was predominantly white males who spoke most and tended to lead the conversations in participatory processes (Sanders 1997: 366). This pattern does not seem to have changed in recent years, a study by Han et al. (2015: 11) also found that men spoke disproportionality more than women during participatory processes.

**Level of education:** Roberts and Escobar (2015: 39) found that those with higher education – university and upwards - were more likely to get involved in a process than those without, with just under half of their participants holding some sort of university qualification. Han et al. (2015) also report that those with a college degree were more likely to participate over those without.

**People with disabilities** have been reported to find their role diminished or even 'demoralising' (Attree et al. 2011: 255) due to their limitations of movement and limited understanding of their needs during participatory processes.

In order to understand and facilitate change, a strategy which considers who is taking part and who is not must be undertaken by organisers.

## The role of facilitation

Within formalised procedures, such as mini-publics or public dialogues, a significant part of managing the process of engagement is the responsibility of selected 'experts' who inform the public and facilitate the meeting/process. Ensuring these people have the skills required for the job is extremely difficult: Organisers must consider the skills of the individual beyond their institutional qualifications i.e. how good a speaker they are; how invested they are in the process; how they convey their evidence, in what form; how the public may react to them and so forth (see Roberts and Lightbody 2017).

*'Encounters of all sorts often go awry due to bad facilitation, confrontational dynamics, rehearsed monologues, shallow exchanges, and the invisible barriers erected by specialised jargon and glorified bodies of expertise'. Escobar (2012)*

The facilitation of processes is a crucial part of fairness and equality within the participatory process. Biased facilitation will undermine the entire process, which is why a non-partisan facilitator is key to ensuring the process is not geared towards a particular outcome, everyone has a say, and all concerns and arguments are voiced (Escobar 2011).

When various groups and interests are being represented, it is crucial to ensure that no group is more dominant due to having access to better resources – i.e. interest groups, developers and large organisations (Hendriks 2016).

Facilitators also work to ensure that discussion does not become counterproductive or disappear off on tangents (Escobar et al. 2014).

### 5.1.3 The outcome: how are people affected?

As outlined in section 4.2., there is little evidence of how people feel following their involvement in community engagement projects. There are no longitudinal studies into whether participating in community engagement processes leads to incremental changes in people's lives. Additionally, few sources look at those who have been left behind or unfairly affected by community engagement. This is a significant gap in the literature.

**There is evidence to suggest that there are long term benefits to taking part in community engagement:** networks appear to be built and strengthened; people become more engaged and develop key skills; policies face less resistance because people have had a say in their design (Peel and Lloyd 2007; Attree et al. 2011 Miller et al. 2015; Roberts and Escobar 2015).

In a review carried out by Attree et al. (2011), the majority of citizens who had taken part in community initiatives benefited from their engagement by experiencing feelings of increased well-being and self-confidence, reciprocity and social cohesion. Although the community projects did not all focus on health initiatives, the health of those participating was affected – people reported to be eating better, walking more and feeling improvement in their psychological health (Attree et al. 2011: 255). Other studies have found that community engagement 'enhances quality of life' (Nixon et al. 2001: 11). Participants generally feel happier and more confident – with one participant in a citizens' jury in Scotland claiming 'I've got my mojo back!' (cited Roberts and Escobar 2015).

Miller et al. (2015) suggest from their study on youth engagement that the young participants interviewed had found it easier to make new networks, were more likely to go into training and gain employment based on their time working and engaging with youth workers.

**Negative consequences of participation in community engagement processes have been reported:** Being held accountable for a decision can put people under pressure, as has been noted in a number of studies (Ziersch and Baum 2004; Ratner 2005; Carlisle 2010). Attree et al.'s (2011: 250) findings highlighted that participants experienced greater levels of stress and exhaustion and found that participating was financially and mentally wearing (p. 256). Failure to be taken seriously or to be given reasonable attention led to some people becoming dispirited (p. 258).

### **Key findings**

- Structural inequalities are often replicated, and perhaps reinforced, in community engagement processes.
- People face a range of barriers in getting involved in community engagement including caring responsibilities; time; confidence in the process.
- Inequalities in income, wealth and social position can often put people off accessing community projects or participatory processes.
- Language barriers, lack of confidence and dominant characters can discriminate against some people during community engagement, specifically women, minority ethnic groups, young and old people and people with disabilities.
- Experts involved in the process need to have the skills required to effectively provide evidence and unpack complicated issues for the participants, to reduce the risk of bias and inequality.
- Long term, and negative, impacts of community engagement are rarely documented.

### **Talking points**

- Young, old, disabled, women and minority groups need to be part of the discussion about how they can be better supported to participate – what would encourage and enable them to participate?
- How can language barriers be minimised?
- How could the participation of people whose movement is limited be facilitated?
- How can young people be heard?
- What can be done to ensure that people are taken seriously when they do enter into these processes?

### **Further reading**

- An interesting discussion on youth consultation is offered by Stafford et al. (2003)
- For more up to date discussions on trust, perception and youth work see Miller et al. (2015) and Coburn (2011).
- Roberts and Escobar (2015) give a detailed account of citizens' juries held in locations around Scotland including analysis of external and internal inclusion.

## **5.2 What are the key dimensions and factors in the relationship between community engagement and equality?**

Five key dimensions that impact on equal, or unequal, community engagement emerged from the reading: Power-sharing; Partnerships; Funding and bureaucracy; Representation, and; Resources. This section will reflect the discussions taking place in community engagement literature in the past decade or so. Section 5.3 will discuss 'what works'.



## 5.2.1 Power-sharing

Sharing the power to make decisions can be problematic from the perspective of both policy-makers/experts and citizens.

Experts and politicians can find the handing over of decision-making power to citizens objectionable (Lightbody and Roberts forthcoming 2018; Hendriks et al. 2007: 368). Frequently the professionals do not take participants' proposals seriously, as witnessed in the People's Juries<sup>19</sup> held in Scotland, where *'(t)here was a perception amongst some of these stakeholders that jurors were unrealistic and expected too much by "wanting everything to change overnight"'* (Stevenson et al. 2004: 21).

However, the evidence suggests that experts and professionals who take part in engagement processes are often taken aback by the quality of interaction they observe; 'Witnesses admitted surprise at the quality of their interaction with the jury. They felt the jury listened closely, asked serious, considered, constructive questions, and were thoughtful about what they heard.' (Bland 2016). Exchanges, collaboration and power-sharing will be diminished if citizen input is underestimated; not taken seriously or actors are reluctant to relinquish control to others (Hendriks et al. 2007: 374).

Citizens and communities can also be sceptical about power-sharing. Burns and Taylor (2000) report that one of the key reasons communities felt marginalised and disconnected from power-sharing was because the 'rules of the game' were set from above. Concerns that citizen engagement was merely paying lip service to public input rated highly as a cause for dissatisfaction amongst participants (although this is not specific to Scotland) (Stafford et al. 2003; Attree et al. 2011). Todd and Zografos (2005: 495) found that those they interviewed felt that participatory processes often felt 'tokenistic' and in Stevenson et al.'s (2004) evaluation, participants referred to the process as a 'talking shop'. Community engagement has been described as a ruse to persuade people that they are being listened or indeed that citizen engagement 'masks new forms of state control' – offering placatory opportunities for community members that in actuality give them little power (Taylor 2007: 297).

Attree et al. (2011) tell us that none of the initiatives they reviewed were controlled solely by community members, therefore it is unclear who is making decisions thus power and accountability are unaccounted for (Taylor 2007: 300). In these instances, the public may well hear and be heard, yet they lack the power to be listened to and influence decisions. They therefore have little chance of challenging or changing things. In some cases there may not be equal power-sharing but there may be real clarity on the level of power-sharing and an understanding of who has a degree of power and control over decisions. This is arguably a key step in a longer process of reform to open up decision-making black boxes.

## 5.2.2 Partnerships

Partnerships include individuals from different organisations working together for a common goal (Cook 2015: 4). While partnerships are ubiquitous in today's policy landscape (see Cook 2015), Carlisle (2010) describes 'ineffectual partnerships' - when there are conflicts between sectors rather than collaboration, and Davies (2007) reports that partnerships can be used as an excuse for 'creeping managerialism' and are often undermined by ineffectual communication and deliberation.

Burns and Taylor (2000) reported that in many community engagement projects, the cultures and structure of public sector partners were not compatible with effective community involvement. Collins too in 1999 found that social activists were marginalised during partnerships as they did not, or could not, work within the restrictive boundaries of the formal partnership. In these cases social activists may have been more effective had they organised themselves instead of entering partnerships (this summation is reflected by Young 2000). Organising and campaigning has been shown to be more effective than strategic partnerships in some studies (see Davies 2007: 794-5 and references therein).

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<sup>19</sup>People's juries, or citizens' juries, are a randomly selected group of citizens brought together to discuss a single issue of importance more information can be found at: <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2000/11/cf957ad2-a2c9-4a52-8fd7-c74fccadafb>

Carley et al. (2000: 25) believe that partnerships between various sectors such as voluntary groups, community groups and local authorities are not enough to ensure that problems are countered long term. It is essential to partner communities with area and city-wide initiatives and to ensure that decisions are made at the appropriate level, for instance local, national and so forth (Carley et al. 2000; Barker 2005). As Carley et al. (2000: 25) explain; 'Without spatial coordination of partnership and governance, there is too much chance of wasting scarce resources'. In order to reflect the needs of the people, partnerships between neighbourhoods, cities and regions must be forged. But in doing this, ensuring that partnerships do not revert back to a default position of top-down government requires a shift in how partnerships are approached and perceived by all parties. In essence, partnerships must be thought of as collaborative efforts rather than forced relations or power struggles.

Reluctance within communities to get involved, or conflicts of interest, can lead to 'forced partnerships' or even competition (Carlisle 2010). Taylor notes that community members can be their own 'worst enemies', they have had to move from a position of opposition to that of engagement, which is foreign for many who are used to being marginalised (Taylor 2007: 312). Unused to being heard or being part of the negotiations, the community members can sometimes become confrontational and conflict can arise as a result (Young 2000).

There is limited evidence to suggest that working partnerships result in better outcomes (Cook 2015: 1). What has been demonstrated is that links between partnerships working and improved processes exist, such as engagement of the third sector and improved trust between partners (Cook 2015). Examples can be seen in Glasgow including the Community Policing Initiatives; East End Healthy Living Centre; English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Coordination Project and Understanding Glasgow<sup>20</sup>. These offer practical partnerships for facilitating community engagement. Yet, as Cook (2015: 2) reports, there is dearth of real-world research and new evidence on partnerships and this needs to be rectified.

### 5.2.3 Funding and bureaucracy

The literature clearly shows that in Scotland, and across the UK, community groups are constrained by a lack of funding, heavy loads of administration and/or lack of power over the outcomes of the initiatives (Goodlad et al. 2005: 932; Taylor 2007: 301; Carlisle 2010).

Community Learning and Development departments in local councils have faced significant cuts throughout the UK since 2010 (Asenova and Stein 2014; Hastings et al. 2015; yellow book Ltd 2017). A report from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that poorer areas are disproportionately affected by funding cuts than those in more affluent areas (7% compared to 5%), and funding for support services in Scotland was cut by 11% in real terms (Hastings et al. 2015). This places community services infrastructures, which have been built and shaped over years, at risk. Indeed this signals a paradox between the growing discourse of community engagement and democratic innovation, in parallel to the dismantling of basic community services (Asenova and Stein 2014). Services have been cut and the ability to organise across the public and voluntary sector is diminishing due to staff restraints (Hastings et al. 2015).

With less funding available and more competition for funding bids, having the knowledge or expertise to apply for funding or knowing what funding is available is challenging (Carlisle 2010: 124). Long term participation requires citizens who understand the funding and bureaucratic process (Todd and Zografos 2005; Hamer 2015) which limits the participation of those who don't.

In England, pressure on community funded projects to conform to best practice (as defined by the government) hampered progress. Decision-making was a slow and arduous process due to the amount of paperwork, and spending allocated funds in the allotted time was problematic (Goodlad et al. 2005). Top-down pressure on community-led groups to make popular or high profile decisions led to diminished community support (Goodlad et al. 2005: 305).

<sup>20</sup>See <https://www.glasgowcpp.org.uk/> and <http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/sharing-our-findings-from-new-approach-to-police-community-engagement/>

Mayne (2010) reports that citizen participation in Scotland has faced challenges due to the differences in planning within each locality: while this allows for regional and situational disparities, it makes resource allocation and communication between regions challenging.

Bureaucracy in community participation exists and will continue to. Without some administrative standards, participatory processes would struggle to remain transparent and regulated. Helping citizens to understand how to negotiate the complexities of the bureaucratic system would be beneficial.

## **5.2.4 Representation**

Warren (2008) highlights the complexities related to some citizens becoming representatives on behalf of other citizens. The problem here relates to how we understand a democratic mandate. Warren (2008: 52) sets out three clear features which exist in formal representation:

- the authority to represent others;
- that the representation is inclusive and egalitarian owing to universal franchise; and
- accountability for making decision on behalf of others.

It is worth noting the problematic nature of community members making decisions on behalf of the absent sub-communities (communities that exist within communities). Communities of identities sometimes clash with one another, and within communities of place and communities of issues there can be little cohesion (Barker 2005; Carlisle 2010).

How participants are invited to take part and sampling methods both affect how representative community engagement is. Most commonly, participants self-select. Fishkin (2009: 98) highlights concerns about self-selection in public processes, fearing that the process is exposed to domination by organised interests. Social pressure, he believes, increases the chances of individuals bowing to the collective will. The chance of a representative sample of the population being obtained through self-selection is significantly lessened meaning that predictions or generalisations about wider society cannot be made (Fishkin 2009: 132-3). Those that choose to take part are often wealthy and well-educated as discussed earlier, and therefore not representative of the wider populace (see Lee et al. 2015).

Sortition<sup>21</sup>, the process of recruiting people by random sample, is becoming more popular. By offering a representative sample of society, random sampling or stratified sampling can ensure that citizen engagement processes aren't dominated by the same people every time and encourage those who rarely participate to get involved, therefore it is a more inclusive process. However, individuals still have to choose to take part once they have been selected (Elstub 2014: 174). Random sampling can also bring together a sample which does not represent the wider populace. Moreover, the risk of stratified sampling to include minority groups is that often a small number of minority representatives have to represent all views of their perceived community (i.e. someone from a minority background speaking for all BAME groups) (James 2008).

Accountability is complex within citizen participation, as is highlighted by Warren (2008). Jones (2003: 598-99, cited Taylor 2007: 307) refers to community leaders or representatives as 'gatekeepers' and warns of the dangers this embodies. In enhancing roles of particular members of the public there is a danger that they may take advantage of that role or make decisions that do not represent the wider public. Significantly, there is no way to hold community representatives to account. For these reasons, resentment from those that were not 'selected' during random sampling, or who didn't know how to get involved, can emerge (Carlisle 2010).

Resentment can also be felt by those who are involved in community engagement processes. To avoid criticism, community representatives have been known to focus initiatives in areas that none of the active members live in (Carlisle 2010). Increasing pressure to carry out tasks and maintain a balanced approach have led some members to feel unfairly responsible for the outcome (Carlisle 2010). Attree et al. (2011: 257) reports that in some cases members experience 'disapproval, criticism and even bullying from other community members' if their actions were not viewed to be honourable. Limitations faced by the public – time pressures, skill shortage,

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<sup>21</sup>See <http://www.sortitionfoundation.org/> for more information.

lack of understanding, limited help on problem-solving and limits to their own knowledge of the policy process and technical details means that citizens may find themselves unable to change their social surroundings and, as Atkinson, sums up 'the danger is that, having signed up to achieve the unachievable, they will end up being condemned as the authors of their own exclusion' (2003: 102). If the role is a hardship, little can be done to harness feelings of reciprocity or social gain from those that are working the hardest and having the hardest time.

### 5.2.5 Digital resources

It is apparent that networks are created by getting involved in community engagement, but those that have pre-existing networks or feel part of communities are more likely to get involved (Marcinkiewicz et al. 2016). In seeking equality, it must be recognised that not all community engagement takes place face-to-face. Communities of interest and identity create networks and bridge relations online. Organising and mobilisation increasingly take place online.

Inequalities in access to the internet remains a key issue. The Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE) (2014) reports that some 400,000 Scottish households will still experience poor internet connection in 2020. The report also states that particular groups in society are more likely to be socially excluded due to having no access or inconsistent access to the internet. Very often these people will be facing other form of social exclusion as well, such as older people, people with disabilities and people living in deprivation. Children living in a house without internet access are 'educationally disadvantaged' and businesses that are not online are at a competitive disadvantage.

Digital exclusion in Scotland is a real challenge to many households and communities, particularly in urban areas but also some rural communities. The RSE report notes that 'Digital inclusion can itself help to address several important domains of deprivation: income, employment, health, education' (RSE 2014: 22). Training tools, best practice, online resources and ongoing projects are all available online therefore it is vital that all citizens have equal access to such a powerful resource.

#### Key findings

- Power-sharing is a complex and sensitive aspect of community engagement which needs to be transparent so everyone knows how their input will be used and how it will affect (or not) the outcome.
- Effective partnerships are based on trust and reciprocity. Openness and support from different partners involved in community engagement take time to develop and require a participatory culture in local governance and citizenship.
- Bureaucratic burdens generate unnecessary levels of anxiety and complexity for community groups. Some people are better equipped at navigating the funding process.
- Becoming a community representative can be highly problematic for citizens, particularly when the community group does not have a democratic mandate.
- The pressure of community engagement can be a burden for some participants, who may feel the weight of responsibility or risk being criticised by their peers.
- Self-selection, stratified selection and sortition all have their pros and cons in managing representation of communities.
- Sortition does not offer democratic legitimacy to those making decisions, thus the question of accountability becomes a grey area. For this reason, every effort should be taken to generate as representative a community group as possible if that group is designed to reflect society as a true microcosm of that population.
- Access to the internet is now a fundamental need for all citizens of a developed country. People must have access to the resources that are necessary to get involved in and benefit from community engagement. More needs to be done to ensure internet access is available for all.

### Talking points

- Congenial power-sharing and partnerships can only be fostered over time. 'Forced' partnerships or groups may exacerbate feelings of division and mistrust. Can social cohesion only be facilitated by letting communities organise themselves to create 'organic partnerships'?
- How can the issue of representation and responsibility be reconciled without over-burdening community members?
- How can accountability be managed if communities are making unpopular decisions or not everyone is taking part?

### Further reading

- Roberts and Escobar's (2015) report on citizens' juries held in Scotland and Stevenson et al. (2004) research into Peoples' Juries give a detailed overview of the challenges faced in participatory processes.
- Gunton and Day (2003) and Ansell and Gash (2007) look at collaborative governance and offer an account on the complexities of partnerships and power-sharing between professionals, developers and communities.
- Attree et al. (2011) and Carlisle (2010) too offer interesting accounts of government driven community initiatives.
- What Works Scotland has produced an evidence review on partnerships and there are additional resources that accompany it which can be found here: <http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/publications/evidence-reviews-briefing-papers/>.
- Warren (2008) discusses citizen representatives and accountability.

## 5.3 What works? what are the most effective strategies and approaches to ensure equality in community engagement?

Selecting a democratic innovation or a participatory process, which engages citizens and does not marginalize or exclude any social group from participating, is challenging. It is complex to ensure all voices are heard equally and have equal effect on outcomes. This section sets out recommendations for policy makers and practitioners. These approaches stem primarily from empirical evidence of approaches that have been proven to work, alongside suggestions based on the theoretical work explored throughout the review.

### 5.3.1 Be prepared to be flexible and learn from past experiences

**Avoid implementing a 'one-size-fits-all' approach:** The evidence suggests that a 'one size fits all' approach does not work (Lamb et al. 2014; Attree et al. 2011). Not all participatory methods suit everyone. Organising approaches that combine methods of consultation will help to utilise the most useful elements of processes while tackling the pressing issues. Hybrid methods can combine the most affective aspects from different forms of participation (Lightbody 2016). In seeking inclusivity and equality, there needs to be a range of invited spaces (top-down processes initiated by policy makers and third sector) and popular spaces (bottom-up spaces shaped by communities and community groups) (Taylor 2007: 311).

**Catalogue best practice:** Work must be done by practitioners and researchers to build a back catalogue of different types of participation and the strengths and weaknesses of each. Honesty over what did not work is crucial for future use (see Lansdell 2011; COSLA 2014; Roberts and Escobar 2015; NSfCE 2016). Reflecting on past projects and sharing information can be done on online platforms such as Participedia<sup>22</sup>, which is a



repository for case studies and projects, or VOiCE, the Scottish platform for engagement practitioners<sup>23</sup>. We need to look at what has worked and not worked in Scotland and the UK, but also globally. Creating websites to keep the public up to date on ongoing projects and how they can get involved is an effective exercise in transparency and inclusiveness (see Smith et al. 2017 for an example).

**Listen to communities:** In order to achieve the first two recommendations organisers must be prepared to listen to communities, hear what they think might be an effective way to get people involved and discuss the barriers they face. Young people in particular like to forge their own spaces and want to be heard on issues that affect their future. People with disabilities or older people are best equipped to provide guidance on what will make their involvement easier. Organisers of these events can share information and stories so that the most effective elements of participation is recognised.

### 5.3.2 Support communities to get involved

**Allocate resources to help people to get involved:** There is evidence, particularly from deliberative processes, to suggest that providing compensation and/or incentives can help young people, single parents, carers and those suffering from financial problems to get involved (Fishkin 2009:114; Ryfe and Stalsburg 2012:51; Roberts and Escobar 2015: 34-35, 201-202). Offering financial or other incentives is important to compensate people for taking the time to participate and to cover expenses which may incur as a result of taking part such as child care, transportation, and wage replacement (Muir and McMahon 2015; Roberts and Escobar 2015:34-35). This will go some way to enabling people facing socio-economic challenges to take part and thus correct the over-representation of advantaged groups (Ryfe and Stalsburg 2012). There is also merit in considering how social innovations such as the Universal Basic Income may contribute to enhance democratic citizenship and community engagement (Bregman 2017).

**Forge new partnerships:** In order to move forward better partnerships need to be made. Partnerships with the third sector have been effective in tackling community concerns (Cook 2015; Miller et al. 2015). Relationships with police forces, universities, voluntary groups and charities can help identify areas/communities that need support and also come up with innovative ways to get citizens involved. Miller et al. (2015) also highlight the need for youth workers to help form partnerships with young people. Being able to speak to groups without speaking down to them or alienating them with complicated terminology is an important part of building partnerships. Policy makers need to seek advice from people on the ground (see Stafford et al. 2003: 367-9; Edwards 2002). A key component for successful partnerships is the use of collaborative leadership by adopting a facilitative leadership approach which includes people working together to achieve an outcome acceptable to all partners (see Brunner and Watson 2016; Bussu and Bartels 2014; Escobar 2011).

**Develop community support services:** Partnerships very often require an impartial third party to facilitate an equal partnership and power-sharing. This can also come in the form of Community Development Services or in the formation of a Centre for Participatory Democracy in Scotland as recommended by the COSLA Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy (COSLA 2014). For instance, the Community Empowerment Network employed people part time to support community involvement – specifically in areas and communities where people historically did not get involved<sup>24</sup>. This facilitative role has been undertaken by Inspiring Scotland's Link Up programme which helps communities to harness the resources available to them and also form relationships with individuals to improve social networks and engage the most marginalised in communities<sup>25</sup>. Trained individuals or groups or 'technical friends' (see Lansdell 2011; Roberts and Lightbody 2017) can help breakdown concerns; help translate any complexities associated with terminology or the participation process; offer information and guidance on how to organise, who to go to for advice, funding and what rights they have as members of public; and generally support communities (see Fischer 2009; Bynner et al. 2017).

**Make the entire process as transparent as possible:** The literature shows that if people know what sort

<sup>22</sup>See Participedia: <https://www.participedia.net/>

<sup>23</sup>See VOiCE: <http://www.voicescotland.org.uk/voice/>

<sup>24</sup>See: NSfCE 2016: 10-23; <http://www.voicescotland.org.uk/>; <https://www.communitydevelopmentalliancescotland.org/>; <http://www.communityscot.org.uk/>; <https://pbscotland.scot/>; <http://www.dtascot.org.uk/>; <http://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/>; <https://www.surf.scot/>; <http://inclusionscotland.org>

<sup>25</sup>See: <https://www.inspiringscotland.org.uk/what-we-do/thematic-funds/link-up/>

of commitment they are giving when they enter a process, and what sort of impact they may have on the outcome, it can reduce the risk that people will feel disillusioned or frustrated if the outcome does not reflect their wishes<sup>26</sup> (Lightbody 2016; Elstub 2014; Smith 2009). Citizens' juries and assemblies, participatory budgets and other processes need to be undertaken as more than an 'add on' to existing democratic practices, and instead institutionalised as part of the democratic process (see Warren 2007; Hartz-Karp and Briand 2009). The contributions democratic innovations make to shaping policy must be visible if they are to be taken seriously by both citizens and political actors (see Font et al. 2017). Using online forums, communities can share stories about past projects – including successes and failures. Organisers and communities can write reports/academic papers and contribute to online platforms to build an archive of good practice in one place (e.g. VOiCE; Participedia). Policy-makers can feedback to communities what the effect of their input is over a longer period of time, taking time to reflect on what people got out of the process and what the impact has been.

### 5.3.3 Offer support to those taking part

**Use clear and supportive communication:** Using appropriate language, avoiding jargon and/or unnecessary technical expressions will help non-specialists and those who use English as a second language (Education Scotland, Same Difference 2010). Using technical friends and neutral experts to explain options to community groups and to guide them on what they are trying to achieve will help place participants on a more equal footing (see Roberts and Lightbody 2017; yellow book Ltd 2017).

**Supporting people with difficulties:** The NSfCE (2016) and Iriss (2011) recommend the provision of interpreting and translation services for individuals who have difficulties communicating. Offering support services for people with learning difficulties will accommodate their entry into community engagement processes and their contribution once involved. Training for facilitators may help them make connections with, and enhance the participation of, people who are rarely able to get involved.

**Support and train facilitators:** Support and training should be available for organisers and facilitators who play a crucial role in driving, shaping and supporting community processes. The skillset facilitators need has widened beyond steering participation and chairing meetings to encompass different approaches to collaboration and interaction (see Bynner et al. 2017; Escobar 2011). Facilitators need to: be flexible, responsive and sensitive to the needs of participants, manage time and contribution, and support participants towards constructive dialogue (Escobar 2011: 48).

The role of facilitator can be a significant undertaking, especially with the cuts to numbers and funding mentioned earlier. Facilitators, and organisers, can experience considerable 'burnout' due to unreasonable pressure and the intense, often overwhelming, work environment (see Escobar 2017). Facilitators can make the difference between good design and bad; between citizens finding the participatory process a positive experience and not; and can help to empower citizens to make changes for their communities (Bynner et al. 2017).

**Change the demographic makeup of who takes part:** Democratic innovations can accommodate the inclusion of different groups of communities. Organisers can use sortition to get random or stratified samples of a geographical community; but organisers can also use targeted groups to get together people from communities of interest or communities of identity. As Stevenson et al. (2004: 24) and others (Matthews et al. 2012; Karpowitz et al. 2009; Stafford et al. 2003) highlight, successful community engagement projects can be witnessed when a particular section of society is chosen to take part, rather than the wider population. For instance, using a stratified selection process to include young, senior or LGBT+ groups.

Success can be achieved by placing people on an equal footing; attracting people to the process who may ordinarily be marginalised; ensuring that people are not coerced within the process while highlighting common interests and promoting trust between participants. There is a risk here of group polarisation (when a group discussion results in the individual's beliefs becoming more extreme); or groupthink, where all the decisions made are unchallenged and have been poorly deliberated; or all members shifting to reflect the strongest

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<sup>26</sup>See also the case of the public discontent following decision-making in Scotland where the public was not fully consulted on issues or decisions were made behind closed doors: Edinburgh Tram system <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-16165656>.

speaker (Sunstein 2002). Yet in Karpowitz et al.'s (2009: 19) research the opposite was found; the group's views diversified the longer they spoke for. Mayne (2010) tells us that this form of homogenous sampling has been used to involve young and senior citizens as well as minority ethnic groups in community planning, with some success<sup>27</sup>. Consulting a cross-section of society in one process but also consulting a particular group – young, old, people with disabilities – in another, and linking these two processes can be an effective way to institutionalise democratic innovations.

**Keep a closer eye on who is taking part:** Part of Audit Scotland's remit is to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of partnerships, specifically how local government and their partners are working with communities<sup>28</sup>. In its favour, auditing can offer comparisons, measurements, value judgments and transparency. Once undertaken, communities can give feedback to discover whether professional and external assessments of problems tally with local perceptions (Blake et al. 2008: 39). This means that potential problems can be resolved before becoming real problems. Linking this with databases like the Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics and Scotland's Census could be effectual here in comparing multiple types of data. While acknowledging that auditing can add to the bureaucratic burden on community engagement, and also that rules, regulations and processes are not a requisite for trust and reciprocity, this is how bad practice is overcome long-term. Strategic Community Assessments (Blake et al. 2008), Community Impact Assessments (Matthews et al. 2012) and Equality Impact Assessments (Asenova and Stein 2014) are also useful, and necessary for facilitating partnerships and closer relationships in communities by working with communities. Without identifying which groups are missing and why they are missing, action can't be taken.

**Make use of technology:** The importance of online resources in participation parity has been highlighted by the RSE (2014) and discussed earlier in this review. Those who do not have access to the internet will be significantly disadvantaged. Some inroads into digital innovations are being made<sup>29</sup>. However, greater recognition and prominence should be given to online participation, such as social monitoring.

Social monitoring includes a range of actors monitoring and drawing attention to social areas which require attention<sup>30</sup>, carried out through mechanisms such as e-petitions and crowdsourcing (Fung et al. 2013; Noveck 2016). Citizens draw attention to social and community issues which require attention and/or funding by making suggestions, observations, starting petitions, blogging, writing reports, organising, and mobilising. This can also include actions such as boycotting or using online tools such as 'buycott'.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, in participatory budgeting processes in Scotland citizens are the experts, creating a bottom-up pressure and awareness of local, national and global issues. Depending on the problem, governments, businesses, the third sector and citizens themselves should be able to adapt and respond to social issues and problem areas.

E-democracy or technology can provide alternative routes of participating and communicating. It can offer access to young people, older people and people with disabilities who suffer from limited mobility; and people that lack confidence or time to get involved. Communities and networks can be created online. Skype, video conferencing, recording and broadcasting community engagement projects, online testimonies from citizens can all help processes become more inclusive, or at least encourage people to have a look to see how they work.

Recognising areas that would benefit from using technologies or online resources, developing people's capacity to use it, improving access to computers and the internet, and offering help through technical friends, would be beneficial.

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<sup>27</sup>Find Mayne's detailed case study here: <http://participedia.net/en/cases/community-planning-scotland>

<sup>28</sup>See <http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/>

<sup>29</sup>See <http://www.demsoc.org/participatory-budgeting-in-scotland/>

<sup>30</sup>For an example see: <https://www.fixmystreet.com>

<sup>31</sup>See: <https://www.buycott.com/>



### 5.3.4 Think long-term

**Invest in long-term community engagement:** There is a rich catalogue of research which supports the idea that community education and engagement has the potential to re-engage disaffected vulnerable young people and steer them away from anti-social behaviour and crime (Deuchar 2009; Miller et al. 2015). Further, educating the public about different ways of participating from a younger age and reaching a new generation needs to go beyond schools and families, but work with care homes, social services and community centres, including religious centres. Creating spaces where young people can go and interact with friends but also other groups of people (the police, third sector workers, youth workers) (Coburn 2011; Miller et al. 2015) can foster feelings of mutual respect and empower young people to shape their futures and communities while harnessing tools and skills which will benefit them in life. However, the research clearly indicates that young people should not be over-burdened by decision-making and participatory processes, in which case monitoring involvement and ensuring that any involvement is fruitful is important (Stafford et al. 2003; Mannion 2012)

**Invest in the future, community ownership:** Citizens need to be involved with planning and development in their communities in order to better reflect the social issues which individual communities face (Henderson 2015). But people can be offered a greater stake in their community through community ownership. Asset transfer is a key component of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and the Scottish Government further supports this venture with the Community Ownership Support Service (COSS). Ownership of assets will help invest and empower communities in the future of their shared spaces.

Scotland is home to some innovative and exciting community ownership projects including, community wind, hydro and solar power projects; island ownership on the Isle of Eigg, Gigha and parts of Lewis<sup>32</sup>; community owned football clubs, housing associations and development trusts as well as a host of case studies which can be seen on the COSS website<sup>33</sup>.

The BIG Lottery Growing Community Assets fund helps communities to own and develop their own assets (Big Lottery Fund 2013<sup>34</sup>) this has included projects like the Ecology Centre in Kinghorn, Fife. Community ownership empowers communities by making them stakeholders and decision-makers; it gives communities a reason to organise and participate; they can see the benefit of doing so and the detriment of not. For instance, the literature strongly shows that support for community owned wind farms is higher than commercial energy company developments (Toke 2007; Warren and McFadyen 2010).

Beyond community ownership, the first round of participatory budgeting has taken place in Scotland which offers citizens the chance to choose what local funding should be spent on and prioritise projects which are viewed to be important to them<sup>35</sup>.

#### Key findings

- There is no one-size-fits-all approach.
- Hybrid approaches can be more useful in reaching a wider audience and overcoming obstacles, this includes top-down processes organised by policy makers as well as bottom-up initiatives shaped by communities.
- Partnerships must continue to be forged with government, public services, third and community sectors, and a range of professional groups in order to share information so that the expertise of many are shaping future community engagement processes.

<sup>32</sup>See <http://www.scotsman.com/regions/inverness-highlands-islands/the-scottish-islands-owned-by-the-communities-who-call-them-home-1-4031801>

<sup>33</sup>See <http://www.dtascommunityownership.org.uk/case-studies>

<sup>34</sup>See [https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/prog\\_growing\\_community\\_assets](https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/prog_growing_community_assets)

<sup>35</sup>See <https://pbscotland.scot>

- Strategic Community Assessment and available descriptive statistics of local demographics (see Bynner and Whyte 2016 as an example) will offer more insights into challenges facing particular communities and equalities groups.
- Auditing community engagement offers a closer and more telling analysis of who takes part and who is missing out. Highlighting who is missing will help shape recruitment and sampling techniques for participatory and deliberative processes in the future. However this is not problem-free.
- Using democratic innovations, such as participatory budgeting and mini-publics, to involve 'easy-to-ignore' groups can improve future processes by ensuring diversity. Heterogeneous groups can offer a different form of insight into public opinion and represent the wider public through random or stratified sampling. However, homogenous groups can also offer insight into what they want or need from community projects and perhaps offer explanations for why groups can be reluctant to get involved in mainstream processes.
- Offering incentives and/or financial compensation can open community engagement up to a wider demographic and lower the barriers to participation for the most disadvantaged.
- Technology can make participation easier, more enjoyable and more accessible, but it can also create new divides and inequalities. Using the Census and other data sources to predict and recognise patterns is necessary for ongoing action.
- There is evidence to suggest that citizens who have a stake and a voice in their communities will be more likely to invest in long-term engagement and less alienated from local developments.

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### Talking points

- Online and face-to-face engagement both have their downfalls – how can they be combined to minimise weaknesses and maximise strengths?
  - Could multiple methods of sampling be used for different processes? Would this be a way to engage different demographics?
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### Further reading

- The Scottish Government: <http://www.gov.scot/resource/doc/94257/0084550.pdf>; <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/engage/HowToGuide>
- The Scottish Community Development Centre: <http://www.scdc.org.uk/community-engagement/>; <http://www.scdc.org.uk/what/voice/>
- Community Places: <http://www.communityplanningtoolkit.org/sites/default/files/Engagement.pdf>.
- And Shaw and Crowther's (2017) 'A Critical Guide for Practitioners': <https://www.rri-tools.eu/-/community-engagement-a-critical-guide-for-practitioners>.
- For further case studies Participedia <https://www.participedia.net/> offers a rich source of examples of deliberative and participatory democracy from around the world.
- Font et al.'s (2017) article offers an interesting discussion on the probability of policy recommendations which emerge from public participatory processes being implemented and factors that lead to a positive outcome <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1475-6765.12248/abstract>.

## **6. Conclusion**

It is apparent that Scottish people wish to engage (COSLA 2014; Marcinkiewicz et al. 2016). Yet, to enable long term participation and engagement, equality and inclusion are paramount. Structural inequalities, including social and economic inequality, mean that equality is a moving target; beyond what community engagement can achieve alone. Having said that, citizen engagement offers a platform for many to be heard and to shape their futures and that of their communities. The literature reports that community engagement creates social cohesion, trust in government and decisions, a sense of well-being for participants and new skillsets.

As citizen engagement comes in many different forms, ensuring that a diversity of participants are encouraged and able to take part is vital. Understanding lived experiences and everyday challenges faced by citizens will help to shape engagement projects that suit, and are desired by, communities. Therefore cyclical approaches to learning and developing community engagement and public policy are necessary.

A concern arising from this review is that many articles highlight what happened in the community engagement process, what should have happened and how we move on from here, but few are actively seeking to design new processes by applying learning (although an exception is Roberts and Escobar 2015; Smith et al. 2017). Further to this, little is reported on the long-term impact of community engagement, both on policy decisions and communities. More empirical work on good practice and comparative work, including longitudinal studies are required.

Community engagement must be placed in the context of broader democratic innovation and citizenship at regional, national and global scale. The challenge is to enable citizens and community groups to shape the spaces for engagement themselves, decide how they wish to participate, and have a say over the partnerships they are entering into. Appropriate resources are required to foster equality in community engagement – financial and practical support to facilitate participation, internet access and provide community development staff. Additionally the development of a variety of institutions, processes and methods – with the scope to research and co-produce new initiatives – is required. Equality in community engagement can provide the foundation for the wellbeing of all people, and democracy in Scotland and beyond.

## **7. Appendices**

### **7.1 About What Works Scotland**

What Works Scotland aims to improve the way local areas in Scotland use evidence to make decisions about public service development and reform.

We are working with Community Planning Partnerships involved in the design and delivery of public services (Aberdeenshire, Fife, Glasgow and West Dunbartonshire) to:

- learn what is and what isn't working in their local area
- encourage collaborative learning with a range of local authority, business, public sector and community partners
- better understand what effective policy interventions and effective services look like
- promote the use of evidence in planning and service delivery
- help organisations get the skills and knowledge they need to use and interpret evidence
- create case studies for wider sharing and sustainability

A further nine areas are working with us to enhance learning, comparison and sharing. We will also link with international partners to effectively compare how public services are delivered here in Scotland and elsewhere. During the programme, we will scale up and share more widely with all local authority areas across Scotland.

WWS brings together the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh, other academics across Scotland, with partners from a range of local authorities and:

- Glasgow Centre for Population Health
- Healthcare Improvement Scotland

- Improvement Service
- Inspiring Scotland
- IRISS (Institution for Research and Innovation in Social Services)
- Joint Improvement Team
- NHS Health Scotland
- NHS Education for Scotland
- SCVO (Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations)

[www.whatworksscotland.ac.uk](http://www.whatworksscotland.ac.uk)

*What Works Scotland is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and the Scottish Government.*

## 7.2 How the research was carried out

### About the Evidence Bank for public service reform

The Evidence Bank provides appraised, accessible and action-oriented reviews of existing evidence for What Works Scotland, in response to policy and practice-related research questions.

The Evidence Bank evidence review process is used to produce this evidence review. The process has been developed within policy and practice contexts and builds on methods developed by CRFR (Centre for Research on Families and Relationships) to address well-documented issues around using evidence including accessibility, relevance, and timeliness.

Reviews are conducted within a limited time-period in order to provide timely responses. Due to the timescale, the purpose of reviews, resources available, and the types of evidence and variety of sources that are drawn on in addressing policy and practice research questions, the Evidence Bank does not conduct systematic reviews or meta-analyses. The Evidence Bank review process is informed by a range of review methods including systematic review, rapid realist review, and qualitative synthesis. The approach aims to balance robustness with pragmatism to open up the evidence base for public and third sector services.

Evidence reviews are peer reviewed by an academic expert and user-reviewed by an expert working in the relevant field.

### How evidence was gathered and reviewed

#### Key sources searched:

A wide range of evidence, stemming from a multitude of academic fields, has informed this report. The most prominent type of evidence used is academic literature including:

- Case studies
- Pilot evaluations
- Intervention studies, evaluations
- Theoretical reviews
- Policy reviews
- Process/procedural guidelines
- Programme/initiative reviews
- Critical Discourse Analysis

Many of the articles used are reviewing case studies or conducting evidence reviews of their own offering a wider understanding of what is happening and rhetoric that surrounds this topic. This must be stated though because much of the evidence is second or third hand. Grey literature including reports, guidelines for good practice and planning toolkits have also been used from:

**What Works Scotland Evidence Review:**

'Hard to reach' or 'easy to ignore'? Promoting equality in community engagement

- Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)
- The Scottish Government
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF)
- Scottish Community Development Centre
- Participedia
- Scottish Executive Development Department
- Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR)
- The Royal Society of Edinburgh
- Women's Centres Regional Partnership
- Big Lottery Fund
- Community Places
- Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (Iriss)
- Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People (SCCYP)

*Literature:* a synthesised evidence review was conducted on peer reviewed academic literature sourced using a comprehensive database (Search Discovery Service of Glasgow Caledonian University library and the University of Edinburgh and the Web of Science) which searches across a broad range of resources, including e-books, e-journals, library databases and theses to identify literature for the review.

*Case studies:* Case studies were found at participedia.net; Big Lottery webpage and National Standards for Community Engagement as well as from articles.

**Key words:**

Searches were conducted using combinations of the following key terms:

equality / equalities / equal\* / unequal / inequality / inequalities / inclusion / exclusion / diversity/ easy to ignore/ hard to reach

AND

community engagement / community participation / community consultation / community deliberation / community dialogue / public deliberation / public dialogue / public consultation / public participation / public involvement / public engagement / citizen participation / citizen engagement / citizen deliberation / service user involvement / service user engagement / service user participation / co-production / coproduction

AND

Scotland / Scottish / Scot\*/ UK / United Kingdom

**Date range searched:**

The date range covered is from 1999-present day. Post 1999 marks the (re)opening of the Scottish Parliament and a landmark for UK devolution. This ostensibly signified a crucial push to adopt 'new politics' in Scotland through community, deliberation, power-sharing and equal opportunities thus offering a logical cut-off point.

## Research summary:

### Distribution of evidence by country, sector and type

Distribution of evidence by country	Number of Publications	
	Peer Reviewed	Grey
UK	13	7
Scotland	14	24
England	3	1
Northern Ireland	0	2
Ireland	0	1
Australia	1	0
Canada	1	0
No country	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>35</b>

Distribution of evidence by theme	Peer Reviewed	Grey
Ecology / environmental justice / environmental management	5	1
Urban regeneration	5	0
Public policy	3	4
Local governance	4	3
Sociology/social policy	1	8
Education	0	1
Young People/Children	0	4
Health/Social Care	5	1
Gender	1	2
Deliberative Democracy	2	3
Community Empowerment/Engagement/Projects	3	8
Housing	0	1
Vulnerable groups	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>35</b>

Distribution of evidence by type	Peer Reviewed	Grey
Evidence Review	8	16
Qualitative	15	7
Quantitative	7	1
Mixed Methods	3	4
Best Practice/Toolkit	0	7
<b>Totals</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>35</b>

#### **What Works Scotland Evidence Review:**

'Hard to reach' or 'easy to ignore'? Promoting equality in community engagement

The review also includes/makes reference to and cites peer reviewed literature which offers theoretical support or explanations for some of the findings and provides additional support for claims made.

#### **Research standards:**

To ensure high quality, a critical appraisal process was applied.

Literature published in peer review journals was judged as having met the quality threshold, though papers were excluded if for example they did not articulate methods used to collect

Data, featured unaddressed limitations, or were too conceptual or problem-focussed for the needs of the review.

To quality review other literature, critical appraisal criteria for qualitative research was drawn on.

Any limitations in methodology and robustness of findings are highlighted.

The draft report was peer-reviewed and user-reviewed.

#### **Inclusion and exclusion criteria:**

Literature from outside the UK was excluded, except one article from each Australia, Canada and Ireland, due to the volume of evidence from the UK. Literature which was not published in English was excluded.

#### **Data extraction and recording:**

*Data recording:* Data included in the evidence review was recorded in an evidence log.

*Data extraction:* a standardised data extraction template was used to summarise study/publication features, link findings with research questions, and capture any other relevant themes or quality issues arising.

*Relevance checking:* feedback was sought from the research team, as needed, to ensure relevance and accessibility.

*Dates of searches:* the review was conducted from June to August 2016 and from June to August 2017.

## **7.3 Acknowledgements**

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**Peer reviewer:** Professor Andrew Thompson, Chair of Public Policy and Citizenship, University of Edinburgh

**User reviewer:** Kaela Scott, Scotland Engagement Lead, Involve.

Additional review was provided by Dr Justine Geyer, Principal Research Officer, Local Governance and Reform Research, Scottish Government.

**Editor:** Charlie Mills

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